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Some Observations on the Stability of the New Regime

50X1-HUM

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1. Until fairly recently, self-styled experts or specialists on the USSR insisted that Stalin's death would necessarily bring about a palace revolution which would be supported by the people of the USSR. The course of events in the Spring of 1953 demonstrated the totally unfounded nature of these prognostications. During recent months, the same experts - among them Harry Schwartz, Raphael Abramovich, Boris Nicolaevsky - have found signs that there is now going on a behind-the-scenes struggle for power in the USSR and that Malenkov, as head of the Soviet State, is faced with a revolt in the Soviet Army. In support of the latter theory, these specialists on the USSR point to the fact that Malenkov has found it necessary to place Zhukov and Bulganin, who had fallen into disfavor during the Stalin dictatorship, into central positions in the Soviet Defense structure.

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3. Some wishful thinkers contend that one of the following three forces in the USSR may be capable of destroying the present dictatorship: the Army, the Secret Police, or the populace. Of these three categories of forces, the greatest hopes are placed on the Army. Those people expecting a Soviet Army revolt against the regime under present conditions are ignorant of, or choose to ignore, some facts

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[redacted] the USSR has some four or five million men under arms who potentially constitute a great power. [redacted] however, [redacted] the Soviet Army has had its teeth pulled since World War II and is effectively controlled by the regime, mostly through the MVD.

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4. Since the end of World War II, all war material such as small arms, artillery, tanks, mortars, machine guns and all military facilities such as arsenals and plants producing military equipment are either guarded by special MVD units or under MVD control or both. MVD control over the Soviet atomic energy program is a generally accepted fact. In addition, MVD personnel - either overtly or covertly - supervise all military transportation facilities, air fields, fuel storage facilities, grain and fodder stocks, clothing stocks, chemical resources, and medical facilities used by the Armed Forces.

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5. This MVD control of all essential Army activities and facilities is not only demonstrated by the presence of units or individuals under MVD control but is frequently revealed by interesting incidents. [redacted]

[redacted] In Germany, the Soviet Military Administration (SMA) used to have transportation control officers at all major freight stations used by the Armed Forces. [redacted]

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6. Armed Forces purchases of military equipment from factories which are not operated by the Armed Forces themselves are undertaken through military representatives in the factories. These officers, usually of field rank, hold key positions in the procurement program. It is therefore significant that they are chosen not from the ranks of the Armed Forces themselves but rather from the MVD at the recommendation of Party committees. Although these military representatives in industry do not wear any MVD uniforms or insignia, it is general knowledge in the Soviet Army that they are as much under the control of the MVD as of the Ministry of Defense. [redacted]

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[redacted] the activities of *amerash* personnel in hospitals and of other duties or *amerash* which are in no way related to its official counter-intelligence functions. In the same context [redacted] *amerash* operates under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (formerly the Ministry of State Security) and is entirely removed from the authority of the Ministry of Defense.

7. On the one hand, the Army is therefore thoroughly infiltrated by MVD elements. On the other hand, special precautions have been taken to keep Army personnel in the USSR almost completely unarmed. Army officers in the USSR have not carried side arms since the end of World War II. If an officer wears a holster, it is either stuffed with paper or left completely empty. For target practice, which is usually conducted twice a week, officers take turns in firing a few pistols which are kept in the permanent custody of the chief of the secret department of the Army unit headquarters. Enlisted men are instructed in bayonet fighting with the use of wooden models rather than actual rifles. On the firing range, each company uses five rifles with which each soldier in turn fires five rounds. Army officers travelling to the USSR on short leave from duty with the occupation forces in Germany or Austria must surrender their sidearms to regimental or divisional headquarters. Should an officer fail to comply with this regulation, he would be disarmed on the way to his destination in the USSR by the police MVD, or commandant's inspection (*komendantskiy nadzar*).

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8. Compared with the nearly unarmed Soviet Army, the MVD is a heavily equipped military force. In 1948, there were seven MVD divisions in the Leningrad Military District (okrug) alone, armed with their own heavy and medium tanks, armored vehicles, artillery, and small arms, air fields and planes of modern construction. Under peacetime conditions, these seven MVD divisions are capable of destroying some 50 rebellious Army divisions at any given time. Although the MVD thus may be the only force at present capable of overthrowing the regime, it is made up of personnel devoted body and soul to Stalin and appears reliable from the viewpoint of his successor or successors. Its strength is successfully utilized to maintain the stability of the regime against the overwhelmingly hostile elements of the Army and the population at large.
9. The civilian population, as is generally admitted, is incapable of rising against the Soviet regime because it is unarmed, dispirited, racked by suffering, and - after the long years of police terror - deprived of any independent organization. Its utter hostility to the regime, however, is well known to the Kremlin leaders who find it necessary from time to time alternately to introduce new repressive measures or to make placating gestures.
10. [redacted] the nation in general and the Army in particular are happy to see the end of Stalin's dictatorship. On the other hand, however, they must certainly be harassed by the thought that Stalin has been replaced by well-experienced disciples. Fully conscious of their impotence, however, neither the people at large nor the Army will attempt any coup, and there is no use waiting for the emergence of a popular military leader who would overthrow the present Kremlin clique.
11. Under more favorable circumstances, however, [redacted] the Army would realize the aspirations of the people of the USSR and remove the present dictators. [redacted] reasons why [redacted] such conditions will prevail only after the outbreak of hostilities between the USSR and the Western countries.
  - (a) In a future war, the Soviet people will be almost totally mobilized. Some 15 to 20 million people will be in uniform. This expansion of the Army in wartime will be accompanied but cannot be matched by an expansion of the MVD apparatus. To use again the example of the Leningrad Military District, it might well accommodate over 70 Army divisions, against which seven and even ten MVD divisions would be rather helpless.
  - (b) In wartime, the Army would have control over its military equipment and would have to be fully armed. Instead of an empty holster, a Soviet Army officer would carry one or even two pistols, troops would be issued rifles and ammunition. Aside from the numerical disproportion, the peacetime advantages of the MVD would thus rapidly vanish.
  - (c) The Army, in addition to its overall political unreliability, would contain strong centers of opposition to the regime. In this category will be found those veterans of World War II who advanced into "capitalist" countries toward the end of that war and who had to be quickly demobilized because their disillusionment with Soviet propaganda made them a very real threat to the Soviet regime. The present occupation armies in Germany and Austria are disaffected for similar reasons. Since they would be likely to be in the forefront of any initial military developments, their actions would seriously affect developments in the rear.
  - (d) Former Soviet prisoners of war and forcibly repatriated displaced persons of Soviet nationality would be drafted into the Armed Forces along with many ex-inmates of slave labor camps. The bitterness of all these people, of course, cannot be exaggerated.

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(e) The Soviet Army would contain some elements loyal to the Kremlin even in wartime, of whom some are Communist fanatics and many are opportunists. [ ] the Communist activists in the Army would quickly find themselves isolated and neutralized, unable to save the regime against the will of the majority.

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12. [ ] an alleged internal power struggle in the Kremlin, [ ] there is absolutely no evidence of it at hand, and theoretical considerations speak against it. [ ] neither Molotov nor Beria have any hopes of replacing Malenkov as the Number One man in the Kremlin, even though he may not have inherited the full measure of Stalin's power. Molotov is known throughout the USSR as the only remaining old Bolshevik leader. He sincerely supported Lenin and subsequently Stalin as the executor of Lenin's plans. Great changes, however, have taken place in the USSR since Lenin's lifetime. The dictatorship of the proletariat, in other words, the subordination of the minority to the majority, was replaced by the dictatorship of the Party, which meant the subordination of the majority to a minority. Although Lenin himself initiated this deviation from the old Bolshevik program after the October Revolution, it was left to Stalin to carry it through to its logical end, by establishing his own personal dictatorship. In so doing, he incurred the hostility of the Bolshevik Old Guard and was forced to liquidate it. In the group of relatively new people with whom Stalin subsequently surrounded himself, Molotov, as the only survivor of the old Bolsheviks, has at best been suffered as a relic of an almost forgotten past.

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13. Beria is ineligible to become the Number One man in the USSR because his function in the past was limited to serving Stalin as the most ruthless of executioners without an opportunity of endearing himself to any group of people outside of the Secret Police. Moreover, Beria's Georgian nationality would be held against him, all other things being equal, at a period when the nation has just emerged from the oppressive dictatorship of another Georgian. Beria knows his limitations very well and would be far more foolish than we have any reason to expect if he aspired to Malenkov's present position. It is true, of course, that Beria or any other man in control of the MVD represents an element of power which no one, including Malenkov, can ignore. When Beria decided to get rid of Ignatiev or of Poskrebyshev, Malenkov presumably did not raise any serious objections, although he is known to have been friendly with Poskrebyshev during Stalin's lifetime. Malenkov's policy of giving in to Beria indicates that Malenkov is a realist [ ]

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14. [ ] the theory that Malenkov restored Zhukov and Bulganin to positions of power to head off a revolt in the Army. There is, in fact, evidence that Malenkov personally saved Zhukov's life when the latter was removed from his post as commander-in-chief of the Occupation Army in Germany. [ ]

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[ ] open talk among reasonably well-informed people that Zhukov's popularity was such that he would be in a position to replace Stalin himself. [ ]

[ ] Zhukov's assignment to an okrug was apparently meant to be executed on paper only and [ ] Zhukov's life was hanging by a thread when Malenkov intervened on his behalf with Stalin and pointed out that a popular war hero might be useful to the regime at some future date. [ ]

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[ ] Stalin accepted Malenkov's advice and limited himself to relegating Zhukov to an obscure position. Zhukov was aware of Malenkov's action and has been devoted to the latter ever since. Malenkov thus had no reason to fear any intrigues on the part of Zhukov and presumably placed Zhukov in a command position because of his confidence in him.

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15. Marshall Bulganin is likewise indebted to Malenkov. It was Malenkov who pointed out to Stalin that Bulganin could not carry out his functions as Army commander-in chief in the rank of general and who therefore prevailed on Stalin to raise Bulganin to the rank of marshal.
16. On the basis of the above data, it seems clear that there is no basis for assuming any differences between Malenkov and the two marshalls whom he elevated to high positions in the USSR. [redacted] neither Zhukov nor Bulganin could be successful leaders of any Army plot even if they had such aspirations. Although Zhukov was and probably still is considered the hero of World War II among the civilian population in the USSR and made a favorable impression upon General Eisenhower, he was generally hated by the officers under his command. During and after World War II, dozens of officers were mercilessly shot on his order, and hundreds of officers and men were put into penal units by him. Because of the whim of two German women (whose identity is unknown to me) who were very close to him, several officers, including Major General Aleksenko, were dismissed by him.
17. Bulganin was considered as an ignoble political commissar in the Soviet Army by everybody from enlisted ranks up to generals. It was commonly said that Bulganin understood very little of military affairs and was incompetent and even frightened of military decisions and always depended heavily upon the advice of military experts.
- [redacted]

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